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Headline: San Diego researchers have ear of world's leading Otolaryngologists
By Doug Sayers, Naval Medical Center San Diego

SAN DIEGO - Researchers from Naval Medical Center San Diego captivated an international audience at the annual meeting here of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology with nine presentations about advances in treating hearing and balance disorders.

Such disorders can present challenges to active duty

personnel who may work in operational environments where life and death can depend on hearing commands or maintaining balance when working aboard ship or while flying aircraft.

Military personnel who have hearing loss, cannot stand without experiencing debilitating dizziness or cannot perform duties for which they were trained represent a loss to their command during a time of personnel shortfalls.

Recognizing the impact hearing and balance problems could have on readiness and retention, researchers at Naval Medical Center San Diego formed the Spatial Orientation Center to study and treat such disorders. Using innovative procedures, otolaryngologists and scientists have experienced promising results and have helped those affected with hearing and balance disorders return to duty status.

The Medical Center Spatial Orientation Center clinicians, researchers and scientists presented papers detailing successes such as ear hair cell regeneration through the use of antioxidants delivered through a specialized catheter implant. Damage to ear hair cells had previously been considered untreatable, leading to permanent hearing loss.

Researchers also showed success in treating balance disorders caused by Meniere's Disease, head trauma induced dizziness and motion sickness. Direct application of Naval Medical Center San Diego's research was shown for treating astronauts, aviators and aircrew whose careers depend on maintaining equilibrium in a tactical arena.

Lt. Cmdr. Michael E. Hoffer, a Navy doctor and research team co-leader said the hearing and balance groundbreaking work being done at the Spatial Orientation Center "is on par with or exceeds that being done at the finest academic centers worldwide. We've been able to identify previously unknown causes for loss of hearing and balance, and had remarkable success in audiological recovery treatments."

As for balance disorders, according to team member, Dr. Ron Jackson, "the long term goal of the researchers is to completely characterize the body's balance system and to develop appropriate medicines to regenerate the cells responsible for balance." Army colonel Richard D. Kopke, team co-leader, pointed out that in addition to Naval Medical Center San Diego staff, cooperative efforts are underway with the Office of Naval Research, the Army, Marine Corps, NASA and various universities and civilian institutes.

Rear Adm. Alberto Diaz, Jr, MC, commander of Naval Medical Center San Diego, praised the groundbreaking research being done at the Spatial Orientation Center saying, "It is gratifying to have world-class professionals from the Association for Research in Otolaryngology react so positively to our research. I look forward to the day when there is widespread application of our findings throughout DoD and into the civilian sector."

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Headline: Okinawa emergency medicine rodeo wranglers win
By HML (FMF) Brian J. Davis, U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

OKINAWA, Japan -- Beneficiaries of Okinawa's military health care system can rest assured that the best emergency medical technicians, referred to as EMTs, in the Pacific are standing watch at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan. The hospital's team took top honors for the second consecutive year at the 5th Annual Pacific Command EMT Rodeo hosted by Misawa Air Force Base, Japan.

The two-day competition involved teams from Navy, Air Force and civilian facilities throughout the Far East in a grueling series of contests designed to test emergency medical knowledge, battlefield skills and physical fitness.

Events included a wartime mass casualty exercise, land navigation, negotiating a litter obstacle course, a civilian mass casualty exercise, exhibiting water rescue techniques and completing a fitness test culminating in a 5-K run.

The courses were set up to simulate the stress, noise and chaos of real-world environments. Heavily moulaged "casualties" littered the ground in several scenarios, while base security forces acted as battlefield aggressors complete with pyrotechnics and blank-firing M-16's.

Team members Hospital Corpsmen 2nd Class John Huffaker, Jeffrey George, Jamison Hubbuch, and Hospital Corpsmen 3rd Class Leander Beams and Cesar Blanco not only achieved best score overall, but they also took first place in three of the seven events. The performance and preparation of the Okinawa team visibly impressed evaluators.

For the first time in the history of the EMT Rodeo, civilian EMT's representing the Towada City, Japan, Fire Department competed in the event taking second place.

"This event provided great camaraderie between the teams from all services," said team coach Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman Robert Hartzell. "And it really pointed out just how far ahead the Navy Hospital Corpsman is in emergency training compared to our sister services."

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Headline: Medical transcribers vital part of Navy Medicine
By Bill Doughty, U. S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka

YOKOSUKA, Japan - Medical transcribers perform a valuable service for Navy Medicine by capturing the events of surgery, autopsies and cellular investigations, among other services.

Their fingers fly at the rate of 95 -100 words per minute and their feet dance on the dictation pedal as they grapple with complicated medical terminology.

At many military treatment facilities, surgeons, pathologists and other specialists dictate over phone lines to specially trained transcriptionists. In Yokosuka their words are recorded on a voice activated machine.

"We have our headphones and foot pedals and we listen to everything they say," said Leilani Liggins, supervisor of medical transcription here. "We have to know a whole lot of medical terminology. We have to know the difference between a

malleus, which is part of the ankle, and a malleolus, which is part of the ear."

CDR Jim Valente, MC, director of surgical services at USNH Yokosuka, says transcription is a vital part of surgery.

"We use transcription in the medical record a great deal," said Valente. "Transcribers produce a very important document anytime we take someone to the operating room. It basically tells what we did in [there]."

Valente said transcribers are among the people who work behind the scenes to help the hospital provide excellent service to its beneficiaries.

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Headline: Jacksonville names Comptroller of the Year
JO3 LeaVonda Battle, Naval Hospital Jacksonville

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- Naval Hospital Jacksonville's Director for Resource Management, Lt. Cmdr. Vicky Mundt, MSC, was recently selected as the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Comptroller of the Year.

Mundt has been assigned as the hospital's comptroller since 1998. Her duties also include oversight and management of finances for the hospital's seven branch medical clinics in Florida and Georgia.

Mundt's keen judgement in financial management was only one of the reasons she was nominated, according to Capt. Barbara Vernoski, NC, the hospital's commanding officer,

Last year, Mundt requested funds to create an endoscopy suite for the hospital. As a result, the new customer service initiative is now a reality and provides hospital patients with state of the art diagnostic evaluations in a centralized location.

Thanks to Mundt's direct efforts, the hospital developed a special system to employ contract personnel. Under the old system, numerous contracts were used to fill healthcare positions at the hospital.

The hospital pioneered the new system combining 40 contracts into one, according to Mundt. Through careful planning, using this new system ultimately saved the command more than \$150 thousand dollars last year and more savings are expected in the future.

"Taking care of our patients is the command's first priority," Mundt said. "I'm happy that I was able to assist in meeting that goal. If the budget increases or decreases, we still have to meet the needs of our customers and with the help of my staff we do our best to make it happen."

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Headline: Recruit medicine symposium focuses on shaping health of armed forces
By LT Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, MSC, Naval Hospital Great Lakes

CHICAGO -- The Sixth Annual Recruit Symposium occurred in April and focused on exploring ways to shape a future military

that is mentally, physically and spiritually healthier than ever before.

Capt. Richard Hanson, USN, commanding officer of Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, described the tempo of the Navy's only recruit training center and highlighted the importance of Navy Medicine to this mission of training more than 53,000 recruits per year. The medical providers were shown a video of Battle Stations, which culminates a recruits training by a full day of exercises that starts at 4 a.m. and emphasizes teamwork and leadership. Recruits are given tests like traversing the bowels of a dark ship with a shipmate in a stretcher, saving ammunition from a flooded compartment, reacting to mock shark attacks and fire fighting training.

After articulating the mission of the Recruit Training Center, Hanson asked physicians to consider looking at illnesses that could be coped with in the Navy so fewer recruits have to suffer attrition. He also urged dialog between the three services to discover differences and similarities in instilling a culture of wellness and health among recruits.

The keynote speaker, Rear Adm. Michael Cowan, USN, chief of staff for the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs), said, "Promoters of healthcare are the rising stars of medicine today."

Cowan outlined how the history of warfare has been about controlling the most amount of ground with the least amount of personnel. Citing Atilla the Hun, who required hundreds of thousands of troops to control what during the Civil War took 1,000 and today takes six soldiers to control the same amount of ground, Cowan demonstrated how each and every person coming into the military is precious and important.

"There are things you need to do [such as] physical fitness, smoking cessation and dental hygiene, which will make you a more effective and efficient Soldier or Sailor," he said. "We cannot afford the recruit who refuses to brush his teeth and allow his health to deteriorate degrading mission effectiveness."

Cowan also highlighted a study performed by the Marine Corps which shows that a Marine recruit who smokes is seven times more likely not to complete boot camp than those who do not smoke.

The speakers then opened the floor for questions that ranged from cigarettes at the exchange to retiree benefits affecting recruiting and retention. Cowan explained how the young Soldier has changed from a single 19-year-old in Vietnam to a married with children 26-year-old informed medical consumer of the Persian Gulf War.

The expectation is that military leaders will protect the fighting force of the battlefield up to and including the battle environment, and that healthcare is in the forefront of this changing philosophy of warfare.

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Headline: Men: take charge of your health

By Colleen McElroy RN, Branch Medical Clinic Everett

BREMERTON, Wash. -- To increase awareness about men's health issues during National Men's Health Week, Naval Station Everett, Wash., is planning a men's health conference with the theme "Take Charge of Your Health," from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., June 13.

The conference will address a number of men's health issues

such as prostate and testicular cancer survival, pre-menstrual syndrome (a male's perspective), emotional health, sexuality and impotence, relationships, sports injury prevention, information for new fathers, substance abuse, heart disease prevention and more.

The National Men's Health Foundation is working to raise national awareness among the general public, and especially among men, about the importance of preventive health behavior in the early detection and treatment of health problems affecting men.

National Men's Health Week is June 12-18, the week leading up to and including Father's Day, the time of year men receive the greatest attention in our society.

Each year, thousands of men and their families face health problems that are often life threatening. Whether it's a serious medical problem such as prostate cancer or simply failing to have regular medical check-ups, many men are unaware of the importance of preventive health in maintaining a long and happy life, according to Tammy Van Fleet, of the National Men's Health Foundation staff.

Hospitals all over the country are opening women's health centers, offering examinations, tests and counseling about disease and health and wellness. There's a reason these centers cater to women, according to Jane Brody, writer for the New York Times. Multiple surveys have shown that women pay more attention to their physical and emotional wellbeing and are more likely than men to take steps to protect their health and check out early signs of possible disease.

Attitude differences in men and women account for a great deal of the health disparity between genders. Jean Bonhomme, MD, president of the National Black Men's Health Network said, "When a boy at age 8 scrapes his knee, he's told 'big boys don't cry.' What's going to happen when that boy is 50 years old and having chest pain?"

There are many explanations for the fact that women on average live about seven years longer than men do. Brody said that not the least of them is that many men fail to take the necessary steps to prevent life-threatening diseases and get treatment while they can still be readily reversed or cured without budget-blowing therapies.

Another concern for men's health is testicular cancer. According to the National Cancer Society, there were about 7,600 cases of testicular cancer in the United States in 1998. Although it is a rare cancer, testicular cancer is now the most common malignancy of young men between the ages of 15 and

According to the Foundation, men need to be encouraged to take as active a role as women do in regularly visiting their physician for basic treatment and examinations. The rate of male mortality and morbidity could significantly be reduced if we could encourage men to seek treatment before symptoms have reached a critical stage. The 1998 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors showed that less than half (48 percent) of all military men had ever received information or instruction on how to examine their testicles for lumps.

The National Men's Health Foundation has set up a toll free phone line (1-800-955-2002) and a web site (www.nmhw.org) where individuals can order a free men's maintenance manual, written by the editors of Men's Health Magazine and developed in cooperation with the American Academy of Family Physicians.

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Headline: Biological warfare and medical response training
From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

WASHINGTON - There will be a live satellite broadcast Sept. 26-28, from 12:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Eastern Time, titled "Biological Warfare and Terrorism Medical Issues and Response."

Concern about the potential use of biological weapons for warfare or terrorism has increased in recent years because of knowledge about biological weapons programs in other countries, numerous recent bio-terrorism threats, advances in molecular biology and the ease of information dissemination through the internet.

Military and civilian medical and public health professionals must become proficient in the recognition and management of biological weapon casualties and in notifying the appropriate agencies and personnel to respond to an event.

This live, interactive, three-day satellite broadcast is designed to educate health professionals about proper medical response to an intentional biological agent release. World-renowned experts from the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases and other organizations will present this free program.

For more information about registering for the symposium and communication linkage, visit the web site at <http://www.biomedtraining.org>.

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Headline: Anthrax question and answer
From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Question: How are DoD and the Coast Guard going to track the immunization process, since it takes 18 months to complete?

Answer: The Department of Defense and the Coast Guard will have a unified system to track vaccinations in place by 2000. In the interim, anthrax vaccinations are being tracked on an electronic registry linked to the Services' personnel system.

The Army will use the Medical Protection System, a module of the Medical Occupational Database System. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard will use the Shipboard Automated Medical System. The Air Force will use the Military Immunization Tracking System. Services' forward anthrax vaccination data to the central repository, the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.

For more information visit the Navy medical anthrax website at <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/prevmed/epi/anthrax> or the DOD anthrax website at <http://www.anthrax.osd.mil>.

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Headline: TRICARE question and answer

From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Question: What is a Primary Care Manager (PCM)?

Answer: A PCM is a medical professional, or a team of providers, in a military hospital or clinic, or in a civilian network, who will assume primary responsibility for providing, arranging and coordinating an enrollee's total health care. A physician designated as a PCM could be one who practices in General or Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics and OB/GYN. Nurse Practitioners and Physician's Assistants who are privileged to provide primary care services may be organized as part of the PCM team.

For more information, visit the TRICARE website at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Prostate cancer awareness

By Lt. Cmdr. James G. Hendricks, MC, USNH Yokosuka

Prostate Cancer is the most common non-skin malignancy of American men. The American Cancer Society predicts that there will be about 180,400 new cases of prostate cancer in the United States this year, and that about 31,900 men will die of this disease. It is more common in men over the age of 50, but it has been found in younger men as well. However, more than 8 out of ten men with prostate cancer are over the age of 65.

Prostate cancer is more than twice as common among African-

American men than it is among American whites. It is also much more common in men with a family history of prostate cancer than in those without.

The good news is that we do have tools for early detection of prostate cancer. These tools include a digital rectal exam of the prostate and a simple blood test. The blood test measures the PSA level in the bloodstream. PSA, or Prostate Specific Antigen, is a serum protease made by the prostate that aids in the liquefaction of semen.

The levels of this in one's blood is very helpful in assessing the risk of prostate cancer. Using this blood test, along with the digital rectal exam, we have been able to detect prostate cancer at an earlier stage than we were able to in the past. This is important as this cancer, like any

other cancer, is much more treatable when caught early. If it is caught early, then the chances of cancer cure are very high with the use of modern therapy.

The recommendations of the American Cancer Society and the American Urological Association are that all men over the age of 50 should have an annual digital rectal exam and PSA. African-American men and men with a family history of prostate cancer should begin this screening at the age of 40, because of their increased risk. There is no need to start prostate cancer screening at an earlier age.

Males who fit these criteria who have not had annual screening are encouraged to either visit their doctors for an appointment to begin screening.

Remember, when it comes to prostate cancer, early detection

is the key. The chances of early detection are greatly increased with the use of the recommendations outlined here.

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Comments about and ideas for MEDNEWS are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, Earl W. Hicks, at email: mednews@us.med.navy.mil; Telephone 202/762-3223, (DSN) 762-3223, or fax 202/762-3224.

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